

## The Saints among us in Canada

Out of the thousand candidates considered for Sainthood by the Vatican, thirty of them belong to Canada. Even Brazil, with thirteen times as many Catholics as in Canada, has fewer Catholics. In addition to the thirty Canadians, the Vatican has accepted as candidates for the sainthood, there are many other potential candidates whose cause is being documented, but has not yet been sent to Rome for consideration by Vatican officials. They include a former Governor-General and his wife, Georges and Pauline Vanier, as well as Catherine Doherty, a Russian baroness who founded a religious community in Ceumbermere, Ont., about two hours drive West of Ottawa.

Canada has more than the share of potential saints because of the piety of Quebecers. During the 19th century, Quebec and Iceland were perhaps the most religious Catholic Societies in the world.

Pope John Paul II may seem to be canonizing mostly religious, priests and nuns, since some of these causes have been waiting for a long time. Fifteen years ago the Vatican speeded up the process of making saints and if the actual Pope lives to the end of the century, he will have canonized more saints in 22 years than the Church has canonized in the previous four centuries.

### The Roman procedures

The lives of the candidates for sainthood are being scrutinized to see whether they lived what the Catholic Church considers to be lives of heroic virtue. If they pass that test, the Church will give them the title of "Venerable". Before they can be beatified and given

the title "Blessed", there must be evidence of a miracle brought about through their intervention. To reach the final stage and be canonized as a saint there must be evidence of further miracles. The exception is martyrs, if they are deemed to have died for their faith, they can be canonized without miracles and without evidence of years of saintly living. Even though they are candidates for sainthood, they are not strangers to controversy and conflicts. Whatever their faults however, these candidates had a commitment to loving God and living others. This made it possible for them to accomplish great things, like Brother André, Marie Léonie Paradis and Emilie Gamelin did.

### The Last Step

Once the Cause is introduced in Rome and the candidates have already been declared "Blessed", how long to wait for their canonization? Or what will motivate the Pope to make this public declaration of sainthood. For centuries, they received two or three causes a year. Now about 50 causes are accepted, so the procedures are longer and the Commission for Canonization of Saints still has to consider the demands of the people of God, the right spiritual atmosphere in an area, so that the saint will be well accepted and will exercise a strong and needed influence. Moreover if the Conference of Bishops in a country sees that time is ripe and suitable and requests this gift from Rome, the Commission will be more inclined to beg the Pope for the declaration.

It is said that the Pope is considering to give more saints to countries where there are less

saints. Moreover he is more inclined to choose saints among lay people, so that Christians will find more suitable role-models.

Finally it must be said that doctors in medicine will not easily give our testimonies confirming a cure transcending science and thus seeming miraculous. It must be added that those who feel very strongly that they have been cured miraculously fail to report to the proper authorities. It is also important that they can attribute this miracle to this one saint they pray in particular.

Thus it can be said that Blessed Kateri stands a better chance to be canonized since she is young, a lay person, who showed deep faith in a difficult society, where virtue was not practiced on a daily basis. Kateri wished to please God in her every action, spiritual love being her sole motivation.

### Canada's Saints:

- Jean de Brébeuf and seven other Jesuits, between 1642 and 1649.
- Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700)
- Marie Marguerite Dufrost de Lajemmerais d'Youville (1701-1771)

### Declared Blessed

- Dina Bélanger (1897-1929)
- André Grasset (?-1792)
- François Xavier De Montmorency Laval (1623-1708)
- Marie de l'Incarnation (Marie Guyard Martin, 1599-1672)
- Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680). Sometimes called "the Lily of the Mohawks". When she was only years old, a smallpox epidemic killed her parents and her infant

brother, and left her severely scarred and with impaired eyesight.

After she became a Christian in 1677, she was persecuted by her own people because she refused to marry and refuses to work on Sundays. Eventually, she fled her home in Auriesville, N.Y., for the safety and freedom of the Jesuit Mission at Kahnawake, near Montreal. She spent her last three years in prayer and acts of self discipline intended to help her become more Christlike and help her convert her own people. She was beatified in 1980.



Kateri Tekakwitha

- Brother André (Alfred Bessette, 1845-1937)
- Marie Rose Durocher (Mélanie Eulalie Durocher, 1811-1849)
- Marie Léonie Paradis (1840-1912)
- Louis Zéphirin Moreau (1824-1901)
- Frédéric Jansoone Bollengier